PF 30 Reflective Journals

**What is a reflective journal?**

A reflective journal – often called a learning journal – is a steadily growing document that you (the learner) write, to record the progress of your learning.

A reflective journal is not…

* Simply a summary of the course material. Focus more on your reactions to what you’ve done, and what you’ve been doing.
* A learning log. On a learning log you might write down the times and days when you read something. A log is a record of events, but a journal is a record of your reflections and thoughts. For this course it will be a combination of both.

**Who benefits from a reflective journal?**  
You, the learner. The fact that you are keeping a record of what you learn is an incentive to keep pushing ahead. There’s an old saying “you don’t know what you know till you’ve written it down” – and several research studies have found this to be true. By telling yourself what you’ve learned, you can track the progress you’ve made. You also begin to notice the gaps in your knowledge and skills.

**How to write a reflective journal**  
Instead of lecture notes, we use reflective journals. The emphasis is different, but the purpose is similar: to help you make sense of what you’ve been learning.

Entries in a reflective journal can include:

* Points that you found especially interesting in your work, reading, and would like to follow up in more detail.
* Questions that came up in your mind, because of points made in material you read on this topic.
* Notes from other material you read as a result of the course – whether this was publications cited, or relevant material that you happened to read (such as newspaper articles).
* Your reflections on this course, and how well it is meeting your needs.
* How your learning in this course is related to what you’re learning in other ways.
* Thoughts that aren’t yet fully formed, but that you want to refined later. This could include your feelings about the course and your progress in it, and theories that are developing in your mind.

Each time you submit your reflective journal, think back over everything you’ve done since the last time. Which sources did you learn most from? Which did you learn least from, and why was that? (Did you know the material already?) Write a paragraph or two about the sources of your new learning.

**What form should it take?**  
Some people prefer to write at a computer keyboard, while others prefer to write by hand. Depending on your preference, a reflective journal could take any of these forms:

* A pad with very small pages – about the size of a shirt pocket or mobile phone. Every time you have a thought about the course, write it on a separate sheet of paper. Later, you can tear the pages out of the pad and sort them so that similar notes go together – e.g. the main points you learned, what you need to learn more about, references that you need to read, questions to ask the instructor, and so on.
* Later, you can transcribe the relevant notes in to a notebook, in which you write clearly by hand. This will last for years, and will be a reference book for you, long after you finish the course.
* If you find it easier to write directly at a keyboard, print out each page of the journal as you finish it. You can store the pages in a loose-leaf binder, as a permanent record of your learning progress.

**Marking**  
Because learning is such an individual thing, you will fall in different categories on the rubric. You won’t lose marks for poor spelling, or mentioning problems, or asking what might seem silly questions. You *will* get good marks by showing that you’ve been reading and working widely, and raising issues that flow from that reading and class work, and making it clear that you have been thinking a lot about these issues.

**How to use a reflective journal**  
The purpose of a reflective journal is that you should be the main one to benefit from it. Writing down your thoughts helps to clarify them in your own mind. So why are you given a mark for it? Two reasons: (a) to encourage you to get around to writing it, and (b) so I can see any problems you’re having, and help solve them.

**Suggested format for a reflective journal**It doesn’t have to be all plain, linear text. Feel free to use varied forms of writing: quotations, tables, diagrams, and pictures.

This is one of many possibilities, but it will give you some idea of the types of question that you can usefully ask yourself. Feel free to modify this two-part format to suit your needs. You do not have to submit a journal in writing to me. You can use many different forms including, videos, narrated slideshows, collages or any other method that you feel would work. You must cover the questions below that appeal to you.

**Assignment-**  
Answer only the questions that apply – but think carefully about whether each question applies or not.  You can provide a written response, and you can also use video or audio as well.

• Your name

• Course unit(s)

• What did I do for this unit (apart from the notes)?

• What was the most interesting thing I read or did for this unit why was that?

• What were three main things I learned from this unit?

• What did I previously think was true, but now know to be wrong?

• What did we not cover that I expected we should?

• What was new or surprising to me?

• What have I changed my mind about, as a result of this session?

• One thing I learned in this session that I may be able to use in future is…

• I am still unsure about…

• Issues that interested me a lot, and that I would like to study in more detail

• Ideas for action, based on this unit…

• What I most liked about this unit was…

• What I most disliked about this unit was…

**Reflective Journals Assessment**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **CATEGORY** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| **Knowledge/**  **Understanding** | Shows an   insufficient degree of understanding of the contents | Shows a   passable degree of understanding of the contents | Shows a   moderate degree of understanding of the contents | Shows a   considerable degree of understanding of the contents | Shows a   high to very high degree of understanding of the contents |
| **Thinking/Inquiry** | Shows an   insufficient degree of reflection, thoughtfulness, questioning, and analysis   with respect to the class work. | Shows a   passable degree of reflection, thoughtfulness, questioning, and analysis with   respect to the class work. | Shows a   moderate degree of reflection, thoughtfulness, questioning, and analysis with   respect to the class work. | Shows a   considerable degree of reflection, thoughtfulness, questioning, and analysis   with respect to the class work. | Shows a   high to very high degree of reflection, thoughtfulness, questioning, and   analysis with respect to the class work. |
| **Communication** | Structures   the reader response (1-2 pages) insufficiently. | Structures   the reader response (1-2 pages) | Structures   the reader response ((1-2 pages) | Structures   the reader response (1-2 pages) | Structures   the reader response (1-2 pages) |
| **Application** | Uses   language conventions (spelling, punctuation, usage, grammar) with   insufficient accuracy and effectiveness | Conventions   (spelling, punctuation, usage, grammar) with passable accuracy and   effectiveness. | Conventions   (spelling, punctuation, usage, grammar) with moderate accuracy and effectiveness. | Conventions   (spelling, punctuation, usage, grammar) with considerable accuracy and   effectiveness. | Conventions   (spelling, punctuation, usage, grammar) with a high to very high degree of   accuracy and effectiveness. |